

MINUTES

Belle Isle Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 20, 2018

Location: Belle Isle Nature Center

Meeting called to order at 9:12a.m.

Quorum established at 9:12 a.m.

Roll Call and Excused Absences

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Rev. Lonnie Peak

Michael Curis

PRESENT FOR BIPAC

Michele Hodges, Chair

Bryan Barnhill

Sommer Woods- arrived at 9:25 a.m.

Bud Denker

Bradley Dick

DNR STAFF PRESENT

Ronald Olson

Scott Pratt

Karis Floyd

Jacob Brown

Michael Terrell

Darlisa Rickman

Amanda Treadwell

Lt. Joseph Molnar

APPROVAL FOR EXCUSED ABSENCES

There was no motion to approve excused absences.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Hodges requested approval of July 13, 2018, August 2, 2018, and August 16, 2018 meeting minutes, **Bradley Dick** moved to approve with **Bryan Barnhill** seconding the motion. Minutes for July 13, 2018, August 2, 2018, and August 16, 2018 approved with no corrections.

GENERAL UPDATES

Chief Updates

Chief Ronald Olson updated the committee concerning conversations being held regarding transportation around the island. DNR staff is currently working with MDOT to form a scope of work. Mr. Bill Shrek and Carrie Warren, both from MDOT, will be providing additional details.

- The fiscal year is coming up October 1st. Amanda Treadwell will have project updates.
- State Budget Director and staff toured the island September 19, 2018.

Bud Denker stated the following “If you look at state parks around the park system you see they all have the same motif on signs. Is Belle Isle Park looking to have the same motif as other parks?

***Ronald Olson** replied that it is difficult to find your way based on the signage already in place. We are working towards an easier wayfinding method and creating some uniformity. **Amanda Treadwell** added Belle Isle Park has signs; a unique motif is used on the island (brown signs).*

DNR Law Enforcement Update

Lt. Joseph Molnar, PRD, LED stated the activity level on the island is dwindling down. Most of the activity that Conservation Officers encounter are traffic related, such as speeding, suspended drivers’ licenses, multiple warrants, and intoxicated drivers.

Park Operations Update

Karis Floyd provided the following for the committee:

- James Scott Memorial Fountain is scheduled to be closed for the season September 23, 2018, along with the shelter restrooms. Restrooms at bus stop 7 and the Casino will remain open.
- Looking forward to hiring two new seasonal rangers and one janitor.
- The “Good- Bye Geese” program trained Border Collies are working along the Strand and Sunset Pointe. The program will continue to circulate around the island in efforts to reduce the number of geese. The program is providing free services until November 30, 2018.

Infrastructure Updates

Amanda Treadwell provided a written update, which was included in committee members packets.

Chair Hodges added, you can donate by texting 313-349-2933 and text the word “fountain” to contribute to the Scott Fountain Improvements effort.

Sommer Woods asked several questions: is there a divider separating the bike lane, pedestrian, and vehicular traffic for the loop trail? How does the trail impact vehicular traffic and not pose an issue to pedestrians and cyclist? Are there any visual plans that can be viewed of the trail? Further asking about the impact of the bike lanes as it relates to the ingress and egress on and off the island.

Sommer Woods expressed to the committee that the City Council has received complaints from the ADA community regarding the Casino not being barrier free. Would like to know if there is a time line to modify buildings and locations to ADA standards.

Michael Terrell will provide Sommer with the document that has already been sent addressing the complaints of the Casino not being barrier free.

MDOT Transportation Update

Carrie Warren, MDOT shared that we have momentum both from MDOT and the DNR to dedicate funding to a wayfinding study. MDOT wants to make sure signs and pavement markings are consistent with the law and not in conflict with one another or giving contradictory messages. MDOT will review a full inventory of signage to determine which signs are obsolete, undesired or to be moved due to inappropriate placement or motif.

There have been recent reports of wrong way traffic on the island. To correct this issue, additional signs were placed to clarify direction. Currently, MDOT is working to figure out when traffic occurs on the bridge and how can we best use what we have to ensure visitors are able to access the island safely and efficiently. A contributing factor is the MacArthur Bridge and the booth arrangement. Bicycle lanes are a point of focus to reduce traffic and make the bicycle lane make sense. MDOT is seeking assistance from the DNR to figure out what makes sense for the park. This is a about a 4 – 6-month project; funding can be secured in the next couple of weeks the study could start sometime near spring. Until we get the ball rolling on the study we can work on smaller projects that we can address over time like pavement markings.

Bill Shrek, MDOT, shared that MDOT is still having conversations about funding and planning.

Chair Hodges asked Mr. Shrek if a resolution from the committee be help from an advocacy standpoint?

Mr. Shrek replied that support from the committee would be helpful.

Chair Hodges requested approval of a resolution in support of a DNR/ MDOT proposed study. **Bud Denker** moved to approve with **Bradley Dick** seconding the motion.

Resolution in support of DNR/ MDOT proposed study approved.

***Ronald Olson** added that booth placement is a tricky situation; from a law standpoint, capacity limit on the island, and the fact Belle Isle is one of the most popular destinations. To touch base on Sommers, regarding pedestrians, cyclist, and vehicular traffic, we do need to have more conversations on how we can resolve the conflicts between one another to come to a common safe ground.*

Chair Hodges added that the ADA certainly is a traffic issue. Alternative options like creating partnerships with Lyft and Uber or finding staging areas like the paddock for parking. Looking for options outside of Belle Isle Park like the Jefferson Corridor. Believes we may need to understand Omstead's original vision.

***Ronald Olson** stated that there has been a discussion about water taxis. However, Belle Isle is not the only location battling with parking and capacity issues. Milliken State Park and Harbor and the entire riverfront. Visitors struggle to find parking once all designated parking spots are taken. If the issue is not resolved, eventually, will cause people to avoid coming downtown.*

Sommer Woods added that it would be helpful if the timing of the lights off and on Jefferson could be improved. Even as it relates to looking at the trails, there needs to be a bigger conversation about protecting pedestrian areas as there are for cyclist. I am not sure if it is possible to have that an option on Belle Isle because I do understand the streets are narrow. However, there is a need to have pedestrians coexist with cyclist safely and efficiently. Mo-Go should be near Belle Isle, possibly on the foot of the bridge, as an option for transportation onto the island even though there is a vendor on- site for bicycle rentals.

Bud Denker, asked whether part of your conclusion is the current bussing system will be apart of the overall system?

***Carrie Warren (MDOT)** replied yes.*

Chair Hodges asked MDOT staff present if the workers strike is affecting operations on the MacArthur Bridge?

***Carrie Warren (MDOT)** replied that the labor dispute is only affecting bridge operations if it requires operating heavy- duty machinery (Cranes, Bull dozers, etc.). No one knows whose schedules have been impacted by the labor dispute. The governor has gotten involved and hopefully soon we can get back to a common ground.*

Outreach and Upcoming Events

Darlisa Rickman stated that peak season is slowing down, it is still busy in the Events Department with planning for 2019 weddings and events. The following events are coming up:

- October 6, 2018 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- 50 scheduled weddings between the facilities
- 40 scheduled special events that range from walks, runs, etc.
- Holiday Stroll - December 14, 2018

Belle Isle Conservancy Update

Chair Hodges shared the following items with:

- Introduced Eric Lofquist, who is a new member of the Belle Isle Conservancy team. He will be assisting with fundraising.
- The Garden Party was a success. Special thanks to DNR staff members Jacob Brown, Emily Erdman, and Jeremy Kemp for making it a wonderful night. \$20,000 was raised to be used to help fund the transitional points between the Piet Oudolf Garden and Carillon Clock Tower.
- Belle Isle SOUP winner was Kwaku Osei-Bonsu. The plan for 2019 is to celebrate Father's Day with a Trill Grill. His vision is to host the largest community BBQ led by dads on Belle Isle. They hope to break the world record of 200 people grilling at one time in one location.
- BIC takes the pollinator pledge led by the Motor City National Heritage. New butterfly going in at in the Aquarium.
- Atwater Beach is underway - 2670 Atwater St, Detroit, MI 48207
- Norma G's restaurant is now open, located on 14628 E Jefferson Ave, Detroit, MI 48215.
- Jefferson East, Inc. has their annual meeting and luncheon on October 4, 2018.
- "Polish the Jewel" luncheon will be held October 11, 2018, this is a fundraising event for the splash park.
- "Holiday Stroll" is December 14, 2018; will have to discuss an alternative to the use of the Conservatory to host a portion of the event due to construction.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 minutes each)

Betty Roberts

In favor of the Grand Prix and Belle Isle. Gave thanks to the committee members, the DNR, and Penske Corp., for renegotiating the Grand Prix racing contract with Belle Isle Park. Agreed with Ms. Sommers comments on the bike lanes located on Jefferson and in front of people's homes. They are poor examples of how bike lanes should be placed. Does not understand how reducing lanes on the island will reduce traffic.

Michael Betzold Ron Olson and the DNR will not explain how they substantiated the Grand Prix's economic impact and how they determined by what process there is "no real impact" on park wildlife from the race. BIPAC approved contract without this information."

Donald Greene Where are all the people in the red shirts who support the Grand Prix? "The fountain presentation is a sham. The Belle Isle Conservancy, the Grand Prix promoters, and the DNR are only interested in continuing the destruction of the park for their own selfish interest."

Anne Miller I am a volunteer. Many of us do not drive here and ride our bikes, many of us will park elsewhere and then ride or walk onto the park, is that included in the traffic studies? Are the handball and tennis courts included in that improvement effort?

Amanda Treadwell replied, those factors are included in the study. We address every ADA need on the park. There was \$200,000, from DNR, given to address the ADA usability. The courts at the athletic field need be updated to ADA and USA standards.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ITEMS

Chair Hodges gave condolences to the family of Zach Zduniak who lost his life recently on the bridge.

Motion to Adjourn: None
Meeting Concluded 10:55 a.m.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

October 18, 2018

Belle Isle Nature Center
176 Lakeside Drive
Detroit, MI 48207
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 am.

Approved: _____
Michele Hodges

Ronald A. Olson, Chief

Date: _____